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# HISTORY AND MATERIALISM

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## HISTORY AND MATERIALISM

### I.

IS history losing its human character and interest? Is it becoming more and more a natural science, a mere record of natural causes and effects, less and less a story, artistic and dramatic, of what men and nations by dint of the will and might and coursing blood within them have now and again achieved? Is it no longer a humanity, a great human document, a stirring, living picture of what living, breathing, failing, and triumphing men are and do, but instead a gathering of just so many puppet illustrations from the manifold happenings and doings in human experience for some natural law or philosophical formula? Some people have detected such changes as these, and certainly the historian's growing emphasis on material conditions, on climate, geographical location, natural resources, and the like, would give color to the idea, while his resort to prosaic minutiae of all sorts, to statistics and to psychological laws, that seem human only through the accidents of association, would greatly deepen the color already given. In short, in the opinion of many, who appear to be at least not without some justification, history is in great danger of materialism, even of gross materialism. Moreover, its indifference to ethical values, which is surely increasing and which doubtless springs from the companionship, fortunate or unfortunate, of history with the natural sciences, is very often thought itself to be quite enough to make this opinion a conviction.

But materialism is an epithet that demands most careful scrutiny. It may be wholly just; it may be even unqualifiedly opprobrious; yet its easy use and its wide use at the present time, though possibly emphasizing its justice, at least suggest that there may be, if not

also that there must be, something besides opprobrium in it. Surely history has the comfort and assurance of a large company in its misery. Education, for example, is also charged with materialism; the mechanical arts are crowding the pure sciences, and the pure sciences the humanities and culture-studies; college presidents, instead of being the moral teachers and great spiritual leaders of fifty or seventy-five years ago, either are not filling their places or are hardly more than financial agents and business managers. Again, politics has lost its quondam patriotism and turned to individualism, that often becomes sordid selfishness, and to cosmopolitanism, that serves as an excuse for the declining devotion to country. Religion has set class against class, has made much of fine music and various other forms of sensuous display, very little of true piety, or, abandoning church and creed and ritual altogether, has turned in theory to nature and in practice to settlement-work, to slumming, and—with apologies to Professor Cooley and others for this use of the word—to “sociology”. Fiction is realistic even to the point of being sensuously offensive; problematic and prurient to indecency. Poetry, even if we forget the verse of Whitman, has abused its great privileges, turning freedom into flagrancy and license. And against them all, education and politics and religion and literature, as well as against history, we hear the people raising the alarm of materialism. Yet, as was said, a charge so easily and so generally made calls for close scrutiny, since a well-nigh universal fault may, if not must, have some praise mingled with its opprobrium. To say the least, all creatures, among whom I would boast myself one, who have an abiding faith in the so-called human “verities”, must believe that what is general or universal has some positive virtue in it, and in particular that this commonly resented materialism of history, so thoroughly up-to-date, so well in line with the movement of things all along the front of man’s experience, can be after all only the entrance of the human element in history into a rich and a full inheritance.

But materialism—what is it really? What is it quite apart from the hue and cry with which as an epithet it has been cast about so promiscuously? What is it, when relieved of the relative, partizan meaning from which, like any other epithet that has become a fad, it has undoubtedly suffered? I suggest the following definition. Materialism is the tendency, which may have all degrees of expression, in life or in thought to treat what is only a part as if in itself it were an independent, self-supporting, originally active, and originally constituted whole. Thus the great test for reality that materialism employs as it walks up and down the world hunting

for real things is what the logicians know as self-identity, but what here, not unappreciatively, we may call lonesomeness or isolation or touch-me-not existence; in a word, unrelatedness or the character of being and acting wholly to and in oneself. True, ordinarily, even by the sophisticated, the term materialism has been applied only to the lonesomeness, the lonesome reality of matter, but no term can ever be held, for its full meaning, to its ordinary application. Idealism, spiritualism, supernaturalism, are also virtually materialistic. The mere names which they have chosen to give to their selected protégés in the realm of reality do not avoid, they only very imperfectly conceal the real materialism of their standpoint. The head of the ostrich may be hidden, but more than enough is still left exposed to disclose the animal and its true character. God may be a "spirit", but if the spirit that he is is something off by itself, something independent and quite *sui generis*, being and acting quite to and in itself or when to and in other things then only miraculously and arbitrarily, and if what is material, physical, worldly, is wholly external to his spiritual nature, being at most or at best only temporal and mediate and dependent, then to all intents and purposes he is as material as the matter that so spiritually he, or his worshipers for him, would once for all reject. Again, man may have a "soul", but if his soul is, so to speak, only one more ingredient of his nature, only one more of the many things in his body, if it is, as sometimes considered, the peculiar, distinctly localized function of just one of his organs, say the much overworked pineal gland, then it too is physical in fact, whatever it may be in name, and the materialism which fosters it can even give points to the materialism which disdains its only verbal disguises. The hidden thing is always more flagrant than what is open and avowed.

So, as was said, materialism is the tendency, having all degrees of expression and, to add to the definition, having also all degrees of candor or concealment, to treat what is only a part as if in itself it were an independent, self-supporting whole. In illustration, this definition makes materialism include, among many other things, the miser's habit or anybody's miserly habit of taking the means to action for its end, and the spendthrift-reformer's habit or anybody's reckless if not fanatical habit of taking the end of action for its means; but it applies also to a standpoint, very general in its nature, that without mention might go quite unnoticed. Thus, over and over again men have obstinately regarded the whole of anything as if somehow it were external to its own parts. They have, for example, treated society and its individual members; nature—witness the doctrine, as often rendered, of natural selection—and all



living things ; reality, which is said to be absolute and eternal and all-inclusive, and the component parts of reality, which are only relative and transitory ; the personality of God and those human persons who are supposed to live and move and have their being in God ; finally, history and the people or the nations of history ; all these wholes, I say, and their parts they have treated as exclusive of each other, as representing different orders of being, as having different relations to space and time, to character and activity. Such a view, however, clearly comes under the definition of materialism, since it does but make the separate whole, the whole that like society or nature or reality or history is so distinct from its own constituent parts, only one more part in some still larger whole. Accordingly, to make the definition safely explicit, materialism is hypostasis of the part, that is, elevation of the part to the dignity of an independent whole, or—and in the end this comes to the same thing—hypostasis of the whole, that is, treatment of the whole as if it were something quite by itself, in short, as if it were only another distinct part.

And with this simple, yet certainly very inclusive as well as very significant idea of materialism in mind it is now possible, in the first place, to determine in just what ways the study of history may be materialistic, and then, in conclusion, to decide in just what measure the charge of materialism against the tendencies in the historical study of the present day can be sustained. Before entering, however, upon these two undertakings, let me say that I shall claim the privilege of being at times quite commonplace. Especially, I shall not be discountenanced or embarrassed if anybody is prompted to accuse me of attacking only straw-historians or only a straw-history. In general, straw-men, or at least men so described under the storm and stress of criticism, have in the past been attacked not without great profit, and in particular my own present interest is primarily a logical one. I am not taking up a cudgel against anybody or anything. The mere logic of a situation, however commonplace in some of its details and however apparently vain or empty in some of its implied criticisms, is to my mind always well worth careful formulation.

## II.

So, to begin with the general question as to how under the definition history may be materialistic, I would mention and at greater or less length discuss the following marks. For the first, according to a popular idea, which even the professional, sophisticated historian has sometimes allowed himself, history is said, or, if not said, is supposed to repeat itself. Witness, not of course the real, but the



imagined, univocal use of such terms, so necessary to all historical study, as monarchy, democracy, individualism, labor, property, money, city, country, people, nation, and the like indefinitely. Down through all the ages these terms are often applied, now here, now there, with little if any regard to the qualitative variation that history can hardly fail to induce in all its incidents, in all the things to which the terms themselves refer. The historian, whose history thus repeats itself, will doubtless have a great variety of different elements out of which to construct his historical edifice, but he can produce at best only a scaffolding, not a real history, if he is blind to the truth—is it not a truth?—that here and there, now and then, on larger scale and on smaller scale are more than mere distinctions of space and time and quantity. To assume, then, that they are not more is plainly materialistic, since it is to give fixity, independence, isolation, to each and every repeating thing, to each thing and everything that is manifolded in space or time or that in its numerous manifestations has now one size and now another. What would we, nay, what do we think of the novelist whose characters only move about, get older, and become larger or smaller in body perhaps or in property or number of exploits, and then die or get married? We may not call him names, being—as always we should be—personally charitable, and being ready to congratulate him on the momentary increase in his bank-account, but his novel we call wooden. And with the same meaning an only self-repeating history, though compositely very complex and though put together with the ingenuity of a master-mechanic and though with samples of its peculiar wares in all sizes, we call materialistic.

Yet do not misunderstand me. I am far from intending to say that there can be no meaning in the idea that history repeats itself. Among others, Professor Gabriel Tarde<sup>1</sup> has succeeded in giving a very rich meaning to the repetitions or imitations of history, but his meaning and in general the meaning is not materialistic; also it is not the common intention of the adage, or the principle, that history repeats itself.

A subtle form of the historian's use of this principle has been his judgment of absolutism or wealth or progress or general prosperity or anarchy from some assumed standard, naturally the standard determined by his own life and time. Here, instead of the present being a repetition of the past, the past is taken, so to speak, as ideally, if not actually, repeating the present. The past is judged,

<sup>1</sup> *Les Lois de l'Imitation* (3d ed., Paris, 1900); translated into English from the second French edition by Elsie Clews Parsons: *The Laws of Imitation* (New York, 1903).

and in consequence is naturally found very much wanting, as if it could have been and so should have been what the present has become. In ethical judgments of historical periods this form of the offense, if offense I ought to call it, has been especially common and of course has been frequently recognized and ridiculed, but the judgments of such other repeating or recurrent incidents or movements as democracy, the labor question, centralization, empire, and the like have been given to the same practice.

The highly logical historian, moreover, who being formula-bound sees history as only a gathering of illustrations of the working of his special strait-jacket, is guilty of the same materialism; and so also is his counterpart for whom history is only a multiplication of facts that may have no other unity save their association in space or time. A history of merely numerable differences is not less a monotone than that of the logician's formula.

But, secondly, the history that repeats itself has usually if not always been also a history of the swinging pendulum type. Its repetition, in other words, has been double-striped. Religion and irreligion, prosperity and depression, government and anarchy, socialism and individualism have followed each other with commendable regularity and perfect rhythmical precision. Day and night have not been more regular nor, as most people regard their coming and going, have they made a more thrilling historical progression. Vibration such as this is doubtless a great thing and it shows a great law, but all the more, because it is vibration as well as repetition, it really changes that upon which it acts or through which it is expressed. A new day is the day past neither in its time or date nor in its content of life and event; the light that seems to return with its dawning is not the same and makes vision for eyes that are not the same. A return from socialism to individualism, in like manner, or from depression to prosperity, or from irreligion to religion, is always, so to speak, an advance, or at least a positive change, as well as a return. Even a pendulum never swings back to its old position. If it did, perpetual motion would be a possibility, and qualitative variation, which is as important in physics as it is in history, would become at once impossible. Moreover, the pendulum historian materialistically forgets, or is certainly very likely to forget, that both swings, both movements of the vibration, are bound to be throughout as coincident and as contemporaneous as day and night. The most that can be done, in order to keep them apart, is to distinguish between the visible and the invisible, the presented face and the antipodes of the globe of experience, the actual and the potential; yet, even so distinguished, they are constantly changing

places, and neither one, however hidden and only potential, can ever be unreal. Do real realities only take turns at being real? I suppose nobody enjoys paradoxes just for their own sake, but a pendulum-swinging history forces attention upon them. Thus, with a meaning that must be felt and recognized, just as back and forth or day and night are intimately involved in each other, both always real and active, both parties to one and the same unity of action, so in history government and anarchy, prosperity and depression, religion and irreligion, individualism and socialism, are actively present in each other; they are not the separate events of different years or decades or centuries. When any one of these movements is most apparent, say in the institutions of the day, then look carefully and confidently for its opposite. Even when the night is darkest the day prepareth; when the day is brightest the night cometh.

As a third source of materialism in history I would mention the disposition to explain great changes as "reactions". That the reactions of history are naturally incident to the vibrations and the repetitions hardly needs to be said, except in so far as it serves to indicate what on the whole is meant by a reaction. So often we are told that when things get so bad that they simply cannot get any worse, or so good perhaps that they have become unearthly and therefore unbearable, then a reaction sets in, the pendulum simply swinging the other way, and that with this change there appears what is purely negative with reference to things as they have been and positive only in terms of its own internal, self-centered making, but what at some earlier period had had a vigorous career upon the stage of reality. Thus the idea seems to be that a reaction in the first place wholly supplants something and in the second place without change or loss restores something else. Extremes, in other words, are supposed to beget their opposites—with all due apologies for the change of metaphor—out of a clear sky. Doubtless for such an idea there is some excuse. Is it not quite natural to identify the life of a society with its visible forms and establishments and through thick and thin to hold to the identification just so long as the forms and establishments appear to be unimpaired? And with this natural habit of mind when a change transpires, must it not seem sudden and reactionary, as sudden, be it said, and as reactionary as the revivalistic "conversion"? Again, is not the reaction, when it appears in power, impairing or even demolishing the forms and establishments which have stood so long, always the special labor of some distinct class or party? Accordingly must it not be as distinct and independent as the class that initiates and conducts it? Witness such commonplace illustrations as the French Revolution or the

injection of Christianity into a pagan civilization. What veritable "reactions" both of these were! Only—and here the error or at least the materialism of this standpoint is disclosed—these illustrations are too commonplace for a safe argument. Of all the reactions in history they certainly were not begotten out of a clear sky. Actual conditions never so naturally precipitated results as the conditions in France and Europe and the conditions in the Roman world precipitated those two great upheavals. A materialist may find only revolutions and only independent parties or factions carrying them on, but the facts are against his findings. Revolutions may be "reactionary", but also they are always evolutionary, the new which they bring being only an outgrowth of the old which it supplants, the manifestation of something that had been only implicit; and as for the parties that incite and direct them, suffice it to say that in society classes seem to exist only to expose each other's hidden ways, to make explicit each other's implicit thoughts and deeds, and that the factions which have managed revolutions have always learned all their best lessons from those whom they have attacked.

So, to resume the counting, a fourth mark of materialism in history is the idea of progress. I almost said the conceit of progress. At least what many mean, or think they mean, by progress is materialistic. Thus, consciously or conventionally, the historian is a perfectionist. Either he is actually conceiving or he writes and thinks of things in general as if he were conceiving a far distant goal of political peace, industrial integrity, and moral righteousness, say a heavenly kingdom to come, toward which a still—perhaps an always?—imperfect humanity is making its slow, so very slow, and uncertain, so very uncertain, pilgrimage. But why destroy the worth and power of perfection by such a hypostasis of it? Why, so materialistically, separate the ideal and the real, the end and the means of life? Again, the historian thinks, or writes as if he thought, history in its past achievements a record of mere eliminations and accretions, a growing out of and away from some things and toward and into other things. Possibly by so doing he compensates for the vibrations and repetitions that in themselves are so unproductive; one offense is often protected by another; but can a vital, organic history proceed in such a way? Also can such a process, however manifold its successive stages, have any substantial worth? Surely, if a man set out to walk from one town to another with a heavy load on his back and changed his burden at every cross-roads, no one would care very much whether he ever reached his destination. And, once more, the historian makes, or writes as if he made, invidious distinctions among the different periods of his history.



Consider the conceit, or the convention, of modernism, of civilization, of occidentalism, of the ism, whatever its full name should be, that glorifies the period of the supremacy of the life and people of the north temperate zone.

Consider also the more inclusive invidious distinctions between the present and the past or even between the future and the present. Perhaps no one thing is more the cause or source of these distinctions or for that matter of the general notion of progress than the well-known though frequently overlooked illusion of retrospection. Here, of course, is not the place for a psychological discourse on the perception of time or of the relations of the periods of time, but let it be said simply that the past of consciousness can never be the past of reality. No man can ever know the living past; one's very knowledge vivisects it to death; one's knowledge, too, not only makes it dead, but also renders it the mere storehouse of the present, the different values of its wares being determined only by their changing relations to interests that are more or less narrow and standards that are arbitrary as well as narrow in the life of the present. But, in view of these facts, how rash it is to derive an idea of progress from distinctions between the known past and the present! When the knowledge of the past and the peculiar characterizations that are its burden are, as plainly they must be, part and parcel of the progress, how strange it is to take the known past for the real past, and through such a confusion to get a case for a progress of things outgrown and discarded or acquired and for a time appropriated!

So often and so wisely the historian himself exclaims that with every new period, almost with every new year, history needs to be rewritten. And why? Because the visible past, materially and ideally, that is, as to its constituent data and as to its meaning or value, is as changeable a thing as the restless present that views it. How, then, can one outgrow the past? Surely only as, or if, he can outrun his shadow. In short, the materialistic idea of progress, what with its perfectionism, its eliminations and accretions, and its invidious distinctions, is not only materialistic; it is also very like a superstition. Certainly, if real at all and substantial, progress must be an ever-present and a wholly present thing; not something to be measured by a dead past or an unborn future, but instead something in which both past and future have their present living parts and so escape the ignominy or the flattery of the pharisaical epithets of less and more, worse and better, that a superstitious, unappreciative, self-deceived present would cast upon them.

But, fifthly, the period, era, or epoch, as usually treated, whether consciously or conventionally, is materialistic. Of course, this is

not to say that any one will seriously advocate a history of mere dates. Dated beginnings or endings of periods are no longer so much stressed as perhaps they have been in the past. Dates are now for man, not man for dates. The date-bounded period, or era, on the whole has lost vogue, if vogue it ever had, since materially and ideally it has always broken down its own fences. The ubiquity of the forerunner has been fatal to it. The certain growth of insight has given it only a relative value, turning its barriers into merely temporary structures set up merely as a means to new intellectual conquests over the domain of time. What has insight not done for the time-duration of paganism, Christianity, medievalism, modernism! Everything in history has indeed had its forerunner; and insight, discovering the universal forerunner, without destroying the significance of the periodic differences has made the periods themselves all but, if not quite, temporally coextensive, each period expanding to cover the whole duration of history. So much has evolution done, or is it doing, for a date-ridden history.

But the retirement of dates, or temporal boundaries, has not always brought escape from the merely date-bounded period. The ghost of the departed still haunts many a historical record, and any ghost that really haunts the life which its bodily progenitor is supposed to have left is always more than a mere ghost. In some rarefied form, a ray of moonlight perhaps or a gust of wind or a habit of mind, it still has flesh and blood. Thus the date-bounded period continues to haunt the study of history in the following flesh-and-blood ways; subtle, if you please, but real and concrete too. To begin with, merely to lengthen a period may bring escape from the letter, but it cannot in itself bring escape from the real spirit of the period that begins and ends with a date. It may, of course it must increase indefinitely the material content, the manifold of events, which the period comprises, but more or less of a thing is not the last word to be said about it. Vital appreciation, for example, requires something besides the interesting discovery that America had figured in European history before 1492, or that Anaximander about 600 B. C. said something concerning the importance of a prolonged infancy to human evolution which so brilliant a thinker as John Fiske discovered only thirty or forty years ago. To lengthen a period, then, though it makes more room, and so admits more cases, admitting as long a line of forerunners as you please, is not to avoid the evident materialism of mere length. Nor, further, does the historian necessarily escape the materialism of the date-bounded period when he seeks to relate a man or an event, a great thought or a great deed, to the environment, to the "times", in which the one

or the other has appeared. The "times" themselves may be without set time-barriers; usually in a loose way they are so made use of, their component factors or influences always having a value close to that of a timeless nature in organic evolution; but only formally to relate a man or an event, a thought or a deed, to the "times", however much the view may be broadened by so doing, though undoubtedly an advance materially, is not necessarily a real escape from a date-ridden history. It is so easy to see and treat the environment as if after all it were not the life of all time acting upon or through the life of the particular time. Thus, for illustration, in the statement that the trade-winds, not Columbus, discovered America, some might see—falsely, I think—a reflection on the originality of the great navigator, but signally fail to see that temporally there was any difference of meaning between the two ways of describing the famous voyage. Yet the trade-winds presumptively are more than an event of 1492; they were blowing at least a year or two even before Columbus was born, and rumor has it that they are sometimes active even at the present time.

To leave the historian's use of the "times", there is one more way in which he is capable of failing to free himself from the merely long—or short—period, and this perhaps is the most ghostly of the three. It is, then, the way of the would-be philosopher of history, who would relate human characters and events, laws and thoughts, institutions and movements, to underlying "presuppositions", "concepts", "*Zeitgeist*", and the like, but who forgets, or certainly seems to forget, that such agents as these are doubly transcendent of their dates, exceeding or overreaching them at both ends, being, so to speak, at once ahead of and behind their times, and having accordingly a value very like that which has been seen to belong to environment. Possibly environment and the concept or the *Zeitgeist* are but the real or actual and the ideal expressions of the same fact, both being the medium in which past and future not only meet but also live and move in the present; and if this be true of them, for the historian to treat either as only one more thing or fact to be cited in company with the other material data which his labors have unearthed from the period under examination is to be materialistic, date-ridden, and all that, and is also almost ignominiously to miss the golden opportunity of his great industry.

It fell to me recently to review a history of political theories of the ancient world. The author, as I fully appreciated, had made an important addition to the literature of his subject, but though claiming to supplement the work of an objective historian who had limited himself "to an account of political theories as they are to be



found crystallised and explicitly stated in literature", and seeking accordingly beyond these bare facts to expose the theories as "presuppositions", particularly as the "ideas implicit in the systems of governments and laws of the times and peoples considered", and even striving after what should "resemble in some respects a philosophy of history", he seemed to me to fall far short of his goal. It is true that the theories which he examined were shown with fair success to be only the formulated presuppositions of their times, but what I will call the dynamic value of such formulations received little if any attention. The theories, as presented, although apparently the presuppositions of the institutions of their times, were theories without the movement and vitality which every true presupposition upon formulation must have. A theory as the explicit rendering of an implicit idea must exceed its dates at both ends; it must always be a solvent by which what has been becomes a party to what is to be, by which a passing view or manner of life or civilization is taken up into a rising view or manner of life or civilization. Its self-consciousness, its conceptual character, makes it in this way transitional, because through all the conditions of its formulation it has and holds the value of an exhortation, to individuals or to a people, really and fully to be henceforth what they have been, to be Greeks, perhaps, or Christians or Americans or in general to be men or to be really natural, and such an exhortation is plainly at once deeply reminiscent and provident or prophetic. At a time of great theories a lost and forgotten Golden Age and a Kingdom of Heaven to come vie with each other for the control of men's minds. Again, formulation of theory is only to do more or less deliberately what, so we are told, the drowning man does at a flash, namely, bring a long, in a sense a whole, past into the presence of the future. Consider, too, how all theorizing implies skepticism, and how skepticism, instead of destroying things, as people have sometimes imagined, only transforms them, turning objects of human worship, human treasures and devotions of all sorts, into mere natural or physical utilities; and what can be more serviceable to history than such a transformation? Yet of this, and in general of the distinctly mediate function living in every theory, of the dynamic value and the time-transcendent character of every responsible formulation of real presuppositions, of the historical movement in every explicit rendering of an implicit idea, the author of the book in review gave only the merest hints. What, however, could be more essential to truly historical study? Events and ideas and ideas of ideas are always valuable data, but they do not necessarily make history; or they too often make only a materialistic history, a history that in

fact, if not in conceit, is still under the bondage of the date-bounded period. Real history must have life, movement, dramatic character.

Five marks of the possibility for materialism in history have now passed before our view, as follows: the self-repetition; the swinging pendulum; the external or arbitrary, wholly revolutionary reaction; the progress that depends on absolute gains or losses and on invidious, pharisaical distinctions; and the date-bounded period. One more, a sixth and perhaps the most important of all, remains to be considered, before the direct charge of materialism against the history of the present day, which will be remembered as the other special interest of this paper, can be examined. To this last mark of a materialistic history, then, I now turn, on account of its importance and peculiar interest giving it special treatment and special prominence.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

Sixthly, the historian is materialistic in that, or in so far as, he confuses what is merely a class-character with a well-rounded, all-sided, self-sufficient experience, that is to say, with the real, all-inclusive, vitally indivisible though perhaps indefinitely differentiable unity of experience. But what exactly does this mean? Apparently it is in form only a special rendering of the general definition of materialism with which this paper was introduced; yet a class-character and the unity of experience—just what are these? And how much does their confusion, the habit or tendency of taking one for the other, really involve?

To speak first of the unity of experience, we have here an idea that properly is intended to be very comprehensive. The same comprehensiveness might be claimed for the unity of life by a biologist or for the unity of force by a physical scientist or even for the unity of God by a theologian—at least by a theologian who had really studied both history and nature. The unity of experience is, quantitatively, the totality of all the relations, actual or possible, of man to himself or to his world. Man comprises, as we are so often told, a physical self, an intellectual self, and a moral and spiritual self. He comprises, again, feeling, cognition, and volition. He comprises, under still another analysis, a life that is natural, industrial, political, educational, esthetic, moral, and religious, and socially has developed institutions in which these different sides of his nature are especially

<sup>1</sup>Of course even a list of six marks of materialistic tendencies in history is by no means exhaustive. Perhaps, among others that might be named and discussed here, no one is more noteworthy than the idea of parallel histories. Political history, industrial history, ecclesiastical history, history of philosophy, history of art or science, may not be treated as independent, though parallel, without materialism.

and distinctly expressed. The unity of experience, then, quantitatively, is the totality of all of these relations, phases, parts, or functions of human nature, and, qualitatively, the mutual dependence, interaction, and determination among them all—in short, the vital, organic character, in distinction from the merely composite or aggregate character of the unity. In general, unity is qualitative as well as quantitative, and the unity of experience can be no exception to this general rule.

Now, with regard to what is meant by a class-character, it is first to be observed that the unity of experience *in its entirety* is actively present in every individual. In fact, its active presence is, or seems to me to be, what chiefly constitutes personality. Furthermore the unity of experience *in its entirety* is also actively present in the general environment. Environment might well be defined as the visible, material exemplification of all the different and various elements comprised in the unity of experience. True, between the person and the environment a great distinction exists. Thus, on the whole, that is to say, except for some one particular part or function, the unity of experience is present in the former only impulsively, implicitly, or potentially; or, to be perhaps more accurate, though there is really no difference in the meaning, only in an undeveloped form; while in the latter it exists explicitly or actually or more or less highly developed. But, in spite of this distinction, in both the unity of experience is present and is entirely real, its activity and reality in both being not at all incongruous with the suggested difference of form between potentiality and actuality, between implicit and explicit expression, or between low and high development. Moreover, this first observation should apply to any of all the possible analyses of human nature; to those already given here of course, and to any other that might be given.

But, in the next place, it is to be observed that between the person's potential and undeveloped and the environment's actual and developed expression of the unity of experience a class-life, a particular social affiliation, which the person enjoys or suffers under, is always mediating. This class-life, however, or the class-character, upon which this life is based, from which it gets its peculiar form and interest, always does violence to the unity of experience. Class-differences are wide and deep-set; a class-character comprises but one among the many different parts or phases of experience and, except for the constraint provided through the wholeness, or all-sidedness, of the person on the one hand and the environment on the other hand, tends strongly to exclude all the others, so that, as perhaps the best way of recounting the situation now under analysis,

class-life is nothing more or less than a hotbed of specialism. Conclusively, then—and just this is the point to be emphasized in the present discussion—the *relation of a class-character to the unity of experience is always the relation of the particular to the general or more exactly of the part to the whole*, but of the former in developed to the latter in a generally undeveloped form; and, as was said, history is therefore materialistic in so far as it confuses the two.

In illustration of what is intended by this account of the relation of the class-character to the unity of experience, the individual is personally emotional, cognitional, and volitional, or physical, mental, and spiritual, or natural, industrial, political, educational, esthetic, moral, and religious, or conservative and radical, honest and dishonest, *all in one*, but socially, that is, in respect to his particular class-alliance, he is only one of the things comprised in any of those groups. Moreover, what he is socially he is under conditions of some special training or special development; and also whatever he is socially gives direction and mediation to all the other relatively undeveloped sides of his nature. Does he belong, for example, to the class of mechanics? Then, while receiving the advantages of such association in the way of traditions, prestige, institutional support and education, technical skill, and the like, he will also, though without the same skill and without the other special advantages, be religious, intellectual, political, in his life of a mechanic or with reference to the instruments that make that life possible. Does he belong to the class of thieves? Then, while practising the talented arts of the thief's calling, he will also, though without training and ethical sophistication, be honest at least toward his companions. Does he belong among the natural scientists? He will make, so to speak, a religion or an industry of his science, though he will lack and possibly even resent, as he sees it in others, the professional manner of any member of the distinctly religious or the distinctly industrial class. Finally, for just one more illustration, is he socially conservative? Then, though not deliberately and certainly not with any avowal of intention, he is also given to temporizing with the established law, not merely to slighting it, but even to transgressing its provisions actively. However law-abiding any individual may be socially or institutionally, personally every individual is in some measure a lawbreaker; or, conversely, however radical and anarchical any one may be socially, personally every one is loyal to some principle of control.

In short, as these illustrations all indicate, any one of all possible class-characters shows, not what some have and others in society have not, but what all have, some however in developed, others in



only undeveloped form, some actually and conspicuously, others only potentially and in a sense privately. When the personal and the social are both taken into account, every creature in human society is seen to belong, either actually or potentially, publicly or privately, to all the classes of society. All men are all things together: all are scientists and mechanics and politicians and worshippers; good men and bad; conservatives and radicals; hedonists and rigorists; wise men and fools; thinkers and artists and road-menders: either personally or professionally all are all these things together, and if some class-alliance be a condition of every man's existence, then at least one thing every man is socially and professionally. Also, as the new term just used, and I think properly used, will suggest, the special materialism of history here in review may now be said to consist in failure to distinguish between the personal and the professional expression of experience. The personal expression of anything comprised in experience is never without some direct constraint from, or immediate vital relationship to, the other things comprised in experience, while the professional expression of the same thing is, or always strongly tends to be, under conditions of isolation and assumed self-sufficiency. Witness, with regard to the latter, the professional ideas of "business on strictly business principles", "art just for art's sake", "science as pure science", "religion as a sacred, unworldly cult", with which personal interest is always in conflict. No class-alliance, no connection with an institution, no professional life in itself, can ever fully satisfy all the demands of personality. Also, even the persistent, private, personal expression of such sides of life as the special profession neglects is not enough to make up the deficiency. It is not enough because of the coincident conflict between the developed and the undeveloped sides of the person's nature. But, this latter point aside, for history to assume that a profession is self-sufficient, the profession of conservatism perhaps or of radicalism, of science or of politics, of labor or of any particular nationalism, such as the Greek, Russian, English, or American, or of any particular religionism, such even as the Christian, is to be, under the definition, materialistic.

Perhaps all this is too simple and commonplace to need so much attention. Perhaps a straw-history will seem more than ever to be in possession of my mind. But, be this as it may, my logical instincts lead me boldly on. One or two conclusions or corollaries that may not be hopelessly commonplace are pressing for recognition, and with brief reference to them I promise to bring the examination of this sixth mark of materialism to a close.

History is plainly an affair of the whole; it is nothing more nor

less than the self-maintenance and development of the unity of experience; and this maintenance involves with equal necessity and significance the person, the class, and the totality—under whatever name, society, humanity, nature, or environment—to which the person and his including class belong. Without all three of these, taken of course in connection with such other divisions or subdivisions as they are types of, the maintenance would be impossible: history would and could have neither vitality nor continuity, neither real movement nor real unity.

History is an affair of the whole, and at least to avoid materialism it should feel itself in this character. To accept any form of an isolated individualism, personal, factional, or national, as for example in the notion that the individual has anything like a freedom of indifference to conditions, or in the idea that any nation has a really indivisible or inalienable sovereignty, or that the natural state is not a universal state, is to lose sight of its real character and to miss its greatest chance for real vitality.

And just because history is an affair of the whole I think, and I wish especially to say, that above all else the person is necessary to history. The class, or the totality of the classes, is indeed conspicuous for insuring a high technical or professional development for every side of human nature. Also the conflict of classes insures a constant check upon the disruption of experience which the class-specialism must always threaten. But in such conflict the check has an external, apparently arbitrary character, and the life which it serves lacks in consequence direct, positive integrity. Only through the person, who is himself the living, urgent unity of experience even to the inclusion of all its differences and conflicts, can human history ever secure its ever-accruing inheritance. Perhaps between the person and society, or the environment generally, there is such a difference as division of labor always induces. Perhaps personality is peculiarly organizing in its function, having in its nature more unity than difference, while the environment, on the other hand, as manifested in its social classes or let me even say in its different kingdoms, is peculiarly differentiating, having more division than unity. On such a plan the two would ever work together for the maintenance and productiveness of experience. But this is only a suggestion, that may seem too philosophical for ordinary consumption, and it will suffice if the person is seen to have a real place in history.

History, I say again, needs the person. The movement of the whole of experience, of all its actual and possible relations, within

the compass of the single personal individual makes natural and necessary, directly and vitally necessary, the application of any special attainment, which some class-affiliation has accomplished, beyond the particular sphere of its development. That such application is born of what essentially is genius will doubtless occur to every one. What is genius but just the capacity of translating one side of life, with its special attainment of skill and insight, into other sides or all sides of life?—and this capacity lies at the very heart of personality. This capacity, too, makes leadership, the partial or the complete liberation of the unity of experience, on the plane of some special development, in the life of a single individual. The person, in short, is born to translate and lead. All persons have some part in the genius of leadership.

History, I must say just once more, needs the person. Personality as a living, integral expression of the whole of experience, as possessing a natural capacity or genius for leadership, bridges all the chasms of history; the chasms of race, of caste, of epoch; of nationality, of party, of any form of division of human nature. Can leadership be anything else but the breaking down of the social barriers, geographical or historical, spacial or temporal? Has it ever failed to make one out of two? Personal leadership renders opposition, as manifested in the “vibrations” and “reactions” of history, only the competition of different sides or relations of human nature, not the struggle of classes and interests that have independent existence and that are not in consequence parts of a real unity of experience. Socially, as war of class with class or time with time, no conflict may seem solvable, but personally no conflict is unsolvable. Personality, sphere as it is of the whole differential operation that makes human life at any time and that has made human history, can even translate enemies into friends, victors into the vanquished, slaves into masters. Again, class-life may feed on difference, but for the person analogy is the staff of life, and to him accordingly, even when the constraints of his own class and time are strongest, all classes and all times, all parts and all sides of human nature, speak, different dialects perhaps, but the same language. More directly, then, than the common, natural environment, and more vitally than any abstract thought or formula, personality links the differences of history together in a truly living whole. What class has not had its leader? What people has not had its prophet? What great period has not had both its personal forerunner and its reformer? And leader, prophet, forerunner, and reformer have all shown how personality ever bridges the chasms of history.

If here some one objects that bridging the chasms of history



makes for continuity and so gives meaning to the idea of history repeating itself, it is only necessary to reply, or rather to repeat, that no denial of meaning to this idea was made or intended. History is not continuous in the sense of the monotonous repetition of any one thing or of any number or series of different things, but only in the sense of single, persistent activity whose movement through its differentiations is always one of positive growth, of qualitative, not merely quantitative variation. So to speak, no new period can ever be more or less than analogously or metaphorically a reproduction of what has preceded it. Class and person acting together secure the development, that makes the metaphors, to the unity of experience, with whose maintenance or constant realization history has been identified.

And, for a last word under this sixth topic, a word that may be quite uncalled for, clearly the person is never a being outside and apart. Self-sufficiency can come to him only in so far as he lives and moves and has his very being in and with the life at large. How could the unity of experience or of nature, which is always alive in the person, ever be external to its parts in the classes that make up society or, for that matter, that make up the environment as a whole? The whole trend of what has been found here in regard to the relation of the person to separate class-characters, of the unity of experience to its professional developments, that are only parts or phases of experience, is strictly against any such idea. Emphatically the person, necessary to history, is personal in and with the life that encompasses him, not outside of it, not over and above it. To treat him as by himself, as outside, would be, not perhaps apparently to take a part for a self-sufficient whole, but—in the end the same thing—to make of the whole only another part.

#### IV.

And now, having completed the exposure of some of the ways in which history may be materialistic, having even allowed myself from time to time to imply that in certain of those ways history to-day at least conventionally, if not actually, is materialistic, I turn at last to the special charge of materialism as it is issued against the current study of history. Curiously enough, this special charge hardly has directly in mind any of the six marks of the offense that I have given; on the contrary its attention has been largely to the emphasis which is being put on prosaic details, natural laws, material conditions, and the like; so that at first thought I shall doubtless seem to have gone needlessly out of my way, bothering my head with what nobody appears ever to have meant by materialism. But the fact

is, as has indeed been suggested already, that just such an excursion is always necessary, whenever the real meaning, in distinction from the ordinary understanding or application of anything, is in question. Such an excursion brings returns that have a peculiarly effective utility for the end in view. Nor is the situation altered at all by the circumstance that the excursion leads into the jungle, into the region where the enemy has his lair. Nothing is ever so near to being well understood as when even its critics are found, however pettily, to be guilty of it.

Thus, for the case in hand, the various marks of materialism which have been dwelt upon here have represented what on the whole have been the idea and the practice of those who are most ready to cry out against the materialistic historian of the day. Certainly the up-to-date historian has been less openly given to them than those who attack him. His critics, boastfully idealistic, have held quite tenaciously to just such things as the literal repetition, the sudden clear-sky reaction, the isolated period, the exclusive class or caste, the unearthly, heaven-sent genius, and the immaterially free common person. They have thought of progress, in just the way that all these things imply, as moving on in jerks and starts of accretion and rejection and as temporally only a series of periods that have no natural dealings with each other. And so, although their heads may have been in the sphere, perhaps the clouds, of the ideal, their feet have been planted squarely and firmly on what, at least under the definition, has the moist, earthy odor of materialism. But, over against his critics, the up-to-date historian has managed largely to free himself from their special conceits. Progress seems on the whole indifferent to him. Reaction and class and period and the rest are little if anything more than forms of thought, conventions, useful points of view with the value of working hypotheses rather than of fixed, objective realities. So far, then, he would seem even to have some advantage over his detractors.

But the up-to-date historian has a materialism of his own, which, though not always in full, open expression, is at least very real as a tendency with him, and taken for what it tends to be it is related to that of his detractors very much as the general to the particular or as the whole to its parts or special cases. In the first place, his useful forms of thought or hypothetical standpoints have at least the reality of conventions or ghosts, and, with these ghosts about, the moist, earthy odor, though possibly much attenuated, must still persist—perhaps, if I may extend the figure, not without suggestions of the tomb. But especially, in the second place, he makes hypostasis, not indeed of a class or period or person, but of the substance which is

called matter. Often in the world of his thinking this substance travels incognito. Now it is nature; now the universal environment; now natural law—whether physical or psychological; and now fate, or even history—in the sense of a single, all-inclusive, self-perpetuating process that stampedes everything happening in its way; but in fact, if not in name, it is always matter. And because it is matter and because before matter all things are equal, prosaic details of the minutest sort are studied with great patience and with an amazing lack of humor and perspective. Because it is matter, too, and because as matter it is made to stand off and apart in an arbitrary independence, the up-to-date historian, though not in the smaller ways of his boastfully idealistic critics, is given to materialism. True, with only matter to consider, this being single in process and in law, his history can really have only one period and be the history of only one class of beings, but it is still materialistic, because it treats the great whole as if it were only another part, as if something were still outside of it, as if it were a fatal process imposing itself upon human life and robbing mankind of the last vestiges of interest and initiative. In a word the materialism, real as a tendency if not as a fully developed practice, of present-day history, is only the great materialism that has taken into itself all the others; the great beast or leviathan, that has swallowed all the smaller beasts, and has taken them in or swallowed them without assimilating them, without—could anything be so lacking in sense of humor?—learning the simple, easy lesson of all-inclusiveness. The ghosts of all it has devoured still look out through its unnatural eyes.

Why unnatural eyes? Because of the ghosts? Doubtless; but especially because of the lesson unlearned though so obvious. Those eyes are looking at what they refuse to see. They are looking at the whole without seeing that the whole cannot be outside of anything; at natural process, or history, without seeing that, if really all-inclusive, it cannot possibly be fate to anything; at material data or conditions, without seeing that the conditions can show only what life is, not what it has to be in spite of itself; or at necessity, without seeing that a recognized necessity cannot be more or less than a well-developed opportunity, that just because known the law that suggests necessity is evidence only of a real, substantial freedom already developed in the life of the knowers.

The special charge of materialism against history, then, is not without point. Moreover, it is true to the definition that was given here, for history has tended to treat its whole as if only another part. But the chief reproach in the charge is not so much the materialism as what I will call the superstition of materialism, the

illusion of the independent, arbitrary whole, from which it shows the historian to be suffering. Thus, in my opinion, the up-to-date history has been more superstitious than genuinely materialistic; perhaps because under the hypnotic influence of its critics, it has taken its materialism of the whole too seriously, assuming in consequence a false position, seeing or fearing to see what has no reality in fact, supposing fate, necessity, outside compulsion, or determination, where none can possibly exist.

I have no desire to be needlessly subtle, although for a moment I may now appear so. Under the definition of materialism, a materialism of the whole should somehow end in what a scientist might call the precipitation of something new or different, and only the persistence of the illusion or superstition referred to above can possibly prevent such an outcome. Thoroughness or wholeness, so to speak, constitutes a state of saturation; it makes the materialism too inclusive to remain intact, and under such conditions a precipitate should be looked for. The precipitate of a materialism of the whole, then, is—in lack of a better name—idealism; not of course the illusive idealism of the critics and detractors of history, not the idealism whose strength has lain in an opposition to materialism, but the idealism that comes with and through materialism as a natural consequence of real wholeness supplanting partiality.

Details, material conditions, and natural laws are all pertinent interests of history; but the materialistic illusion of the independent, arbitrary whole, before which all details are equal and conditions and laws mean external necessity and blind fate, has threatened to rob history of its proper interest and vitality, making it materialistic, when just by reason of its present tendencies, just because of its thoroughness, its regard to details, and its study of laws, it has a right to be deeply and genuinely idealistic. Recognition of this right would lead, I venture to believe and I have written this long article chiefly to say, to such a change in history as the stereoscope works upon a flat picture; it would give perspective where perspective has been lacking; dramatic movement—without loss of scientific virtuosity, where there has been only process or law.

The idea of the experience-whole, of the unity of experience, made much of in a preceding section, here comes to my aid, as I conclude. It led, as will be remembered, to emphasis of the importance of the person, in whom all the elements of experience were moving with greater or less power, with higher or lower development, and now, as the materialistic illusion of the independent whole is dispelled, as its precipitate, idealism, comes to view, the same emphasis is again possible. Thus, the idea of the unity of experience



suggests very clearly that in experience matter—under its own name or under any of its disguises—may have either one of two meanings. It may be a special thing, a distinct group of phenomena, or a general function capable of as many applications or expressions as there are relations in experience. Let me explain.

As to the first of the two meanings: if human nature in its unity does indeed include a physical part, then the outside physical or material world, details, conditions, laws, and all, can be but the special, isolated, why not say with real appreciation even the factional and technical and professional development of just that part, and as in general so here the genius of personality, ever quick with the whole unity of experience, or of human nature, is constantly reaping for its whole self the advantage of this particular professional development and association. How else justify natural poetry or art? or natural religion? How explain mechanical invention with its wonderful applications of material, natural resources to all sorts of human ends and purposes? How account for the sails and ships and the navigator's devices in general that enabled the trade-winds to discover America?

But, secondly, matter may be, and I think in actual use has had all the value of being, something more relative or more general, and therefore less tangible and specific than this. In my opinion it has often stood, not for a distinct thing, not for a specific and more or less independent group of phenomena, the so-called outer, material world, but rather for a very general relationship, in a word, for so much of reality as is concerned with maintaining, relatively to any one side of life, all other sides of life in the unity of experience. So regarded, it has the character of the general restraint that the unity of experience is always putting upon each and every expression of specialism and, as was suggested, it will have as many specific expressions as experience shows tendencies to specific development. Also, in this character, to recall the distinction that was used before, matter will be directly vital and personal—just for being such a general function in the unity of experience—rather than professional and fixedly specific as under the first meaning remarked here. So to speak, it will be a rôle in which every element of personal experience will have some part. Perhaps the fact that even the outer material world as men think of it is a decidedly ambiguous thing, being now the special world of technical physical science and now the world that includes, relatively to any one human being, all other human beings as well as all other classes and races, all other animals, all other things that live, and all other merely existent objects, may be cited in illustration and evidence of what is intended by the

idea of matter as of double meaning, as now a distinct, separate thing, specially and professionally developed, and now a general function vital to and in personality. Perhaps, too, it is worth while to add that in environment, nature, natural selection, the biologist must recognize, and to a certain extent has recognized, the same distinction between specific thing and general function, between the separate group of external phenomena and the vital function that belongs within every organism. Such an addition seems especially worth while because the historian and the evolutionist are bound to have a common interest.

But we now have before our view the two meanings of matter which the idea of the unity of experience has suggested. There is matter as the profession, class, or "kingdom", and there is matter as the function in personality; and it is hardly necessary to say that these two meanings are not at all incongruous. Simply they are both involved in the maintenance and development of experience. With apologies for the repetition, they are only a very general, perhaps the most general and most inclusive expression of the important difference, noted above, between the class-character and the unity of experience, between the technical and the personal expression of anything; and they show that a materialism of the whole not only precipitates idealism but also restores the person to history.

The person, member of all classes, or kingdoms, possesses vitally the whole; this whole permeates his entire nature. Materialism may deny him such membership and such possession, but idealism, coming with removal of the illusion of the independent whole, restores them. In the person history is seen to be an affair of the whole and to be at the same time vital, not fatal, not mechanical. And so history may gain anew the humanity and dramatic interest that to many it has appeared in serious danger of losing.

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